

The impact of gender images in commercials on the self-consciousness of adolescents

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Abstract

© Lomonosov Moscow State University, 2015. Television has a strong impact on gender-identity development. Theoretical analysis shows that the direct perception of different gender characteristics in advertising images has a specific impact on gender self-consciousness, primarily at the unconscious level. The purpose of our study was to uncover features of this impact. In this study, the effects of advertising images on the gender self-consciousness of teenagers were investigated. Two hypotheses were examined: (1) Perception of gender images in TV commercials has individual variability and is connected with gender features of self-consciousness (gender type of personality, gender differentiation of consciousness, the specifics of gender identification). (2) Direct perception of gender images in TV commercials has a differential influence on the transformation of verbal (cognitive) and nonverbal (emotive) levels of selfconsciousness. The commercials, which were for chocolate, contained different gender types of male and female images (masculine female images, androgynous images, and feminine male images); they used as stimulus materials in an experimental situation involving 61 teenagers. The contents and dynamics of gender self-consciousness in adolescents were investigated using the psychosemantic method of "multiple identifications." We discovered that the girls' preferences for gender images were more varied than those of the boys. Despite different variants in the gender characteristics in the advertising images, their impact on the gender self-consciousness of the adolescents consisted mostly of gender differentiation and identification with the images of their own gender. In general, in regard to the direct impact in the experimental situation, at the cognitive level, the girls revealed changes in the enhancement of gender identification with images of their gender, and the boys were characterized by the enhancement of gender differentiation. At the level of emotive evaluation, in contrast to the cognitive level, we observed stronger dynamics of the changes in selfconsciousness (enhancement of gender differentiation and enhancement of identification with images of ideals and parental images). The results clearly showed the quite high plasticity of self-consciousness structures and their susceptibility to externally designated images. We concluded that, in their direct perception, features of gender images in TV commercials have specific effects on the consciousness of adolescents: they reinforce already-formed gender categories and self-identification. We consider this research a pilot study, and we are planning to check the results on a more representative sample with different age groups.

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Keywords

Adolescent, Commercials, Gender images, Gender self-consciousness, Identification